

THE BLUE RIDGE SOCCER LEAGUE was founded on the principle of providing the youth of Southwestern Virginia with the opportunity to acquire and develop soccer skills through a higher level of competition. These skills, as well as the individual growth of the players, cannot be nurtured in an environment of confrontation, poor sportsmanship, and verbal and/or physical abuse among spectators, coaches, game participants and game officials. While BRSL cannot dictate the internal administrative rules and regulations of member clubs, it must provide a framework for governing undesirable behavior within which member clubs must administer their teams. Players, coaches, team officials and spectators are expected to behave in a manner consistent with the principles of good sportsmanship.

While it is not possible to spell out each and every possible violation, this Section attempts to address the most common types of violations. In addition to specific violations, there is a general obligation to engage in conduct that is honest, displays good sportsmanship, and follows the Rules of the Game.

BLUE RIDGE SOCCER LEAGUE (BRSL) APPROACH TO CONDUCT

- A. The existence of the BRSL Conduct Committee with the authority to discipline does not relieve each club of its responsibility to insure that players under its sponsorship will play and learn in a safe and supportive environment. The BRSL expects clubs to take prompt, effective corrective action when it detects problems or when the BRSL brings problems to its attention. The Conduct Committee will defer to club action provided it is satisfied that the action taken is appropriate and timely.
- B. When a club becomes a Member of BRSL it agrees to adhere to the BRSL policies, procedures, rules and codes of conduct. The BRSL form "Soccer Club Commitment to the BRSL Codes of Conduct," must be submitted from each club each year to the BRSL Administrator PRIOR to the First Scheduled league game in Both the FALL and the Spring Seasons. Codes of Conduct forms are on the BRSL website.
- C. BRSL Clubs and club & team officials will be held responsible for repeated occurrences of misconduct that show a disregard for conduct guidelines. The

club, team, player, team official, or parent could be subject to long-term penalties, up to and including expulsion from the BRSL, and/or financial penalties. Each coach, player, team official, and club official is required to respond to an inquiry by the Conduct Committee and failure to promptly respond may be considered a separate violation of the standards of conduct.

D. It is the intent of the BRSL to manage league conduct issues in the following manner:

1. Provide clear league-wide standards and expectations of appropriate sporting conduct.
2. Have clearly stated and immediate BRSL Penalties for ANY Send-off's by officials occurring at any BRSL League Game. ALL send-offs of Coaches, Players, Team Officials, and any other BRSL Parent/Guardian or spectator will be penalized.
3. Require signed Standards of Conduct forms for Coaches, Assistant Coaches, Team Managers and other Team Officials, Parents/Guardians, and Players, and adherence to same.
4. Require Member Clubs to commit to the BRSL Conduct Standards and the printing, distribution, explanation, and signing, (and retention by Team Manager) of Conduct Code forms by every Parent/Guardian, Coach, Team Official, and Player who is associated with BRSL league competition.
5. Measure the conduct of Coaches/Team Officials, Parents, and Players at all league games by using referee feedback with the BRSL ORANGE CONDUCT CARD evaluations.
 - a. Feedback from the ORANGE cards will be used by the League and distributed in the following manner:
 - i. Feedback will be processed weekly
 - ii. Member Club Representatives will be notified for all negative ratings for Sportsmanship, Irresponsible Behavior, and for all send-offs related to their club. The BRSL will expect the Member Club to address these issues with the offending

party(ies). If the Conduct Committee so requires, feedback as to the action taken by the Member Club may be required.

- b. Using this feedback, the Conduct Committee will recognize the highest rated team in each division at the culmination of the season.
- c. The BRSL will use this feedback to identify Coaches/Team Officials, Players, Parents, and Clubs who are NOT meeting BRSL conduct standards and recommend intervention and corrective action by the Member Club. In the absence of appropriate action and feedback (if required) by the Member Club in a timely manner, the BRSL Conduct Committee may review the situation and levy judgment as appropriate. This could include no action, or penalties including suspension from league play, placement in bad standing, fines, and/or other adjudication deemed appropriate to the conduct violation.
- E. The BRSL will make Best Practices available to Member Clubs regarding how they might set up a club committee to handle sportsmanship and conduct complaints that are sent to them.
- F. The BRSL will continuously promote the adoption and understanding of good sportsmanship within the league arena.

CLUB COMPLAINT PROCESS

- A. In order to be considered by the Conduct Committee, complaints may only originate from (1) a member club representative or president, (2) a referee/referee assignor, (3) a member of the Conduct Committee, or (4) a member of the BRSL Board of Directors. Complaints shall not originate from individual players, coaches, parents, spectators, or any other "interested" parties. These parties may request that a member club bring the complaint to the attention of the Conduct Committee, but they shall have no direct right to the filing of the complaint. A list of each club's BRSL Representatives shall be maintained on the BRSL website.
 - 1. The initial complaint shall only be made by electronic mail to the President or Club Representative of the accused club and the Chairperson of the

Conduct Committee. Unless the Chairperson of the Conduct Committee determines that wider distribution of the complaint is immediately necessary due to issues such as of player safety, the complaint shall remain a private issue for a 72-hour period.

2. The accused club has 72 hours to respond to the initial complaint, which shall be by electronic mail to the complaining club and the Chairperson of the Conduct Committee.
3. If the complaining club is satisfied with the response and actions of the accused club, then no further action is necessary. The Chairperson of the Conduct Committee may provide wider dissemination of the complaint and response if it is deemed to be in the best interests of the BRSL.
4. If the complaining club is not satisfied with the response and actions of the accused club, then it may ask the Conduct Committee to hold an official hearing on the matter. At this time, the member club filing the complaint must also submit to BRSL a check in the amount of \$100.⁰⁰.
 - a. If so requested, the matter shall then be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the Conduct Committee, or, if no meeting is currently scheduled, as soon as practicable with consideration given to the issues involved.
 - b. The matter can still be settled by the complaining club and accused club during this period, and the parties are encouraged to continue to resolve their differences. In this case of the matter being resolved, it will be removed from the Conduct Committee agenda and the club's check will be returned.
 - c. If the complaint is sustained, the check will be returned; if the complaint is denied, the check will be deposited into the general fund of the League. The Conduct Committee can return the club's check if circumstances warrant.

CONDUCT HEARINGS

- A. The Chairperson of the Conduct Committee shall advise the Club Representative of both the reporting club and the accused club of the alleged offense or violation and the time and location of the hearing.
- B. It shall be the duty of the Club Representative, upon advice of the Chairperson of the Conduct Committee to contact the offender, apprise him/her of the situation and inform him/her that the Conduct Committee action is pending. The Club Representative shall request the offender to contact the Chairperson of the Conduct Committee. If the offender is a player, his/her coach must contact the Chairperson of the Conduct Committee.
1. Upon being contacted by the offender, the Chairperson of the Conduct Committee shall advise the offender as to offense or alleged violation and the date, time and location of the hearing. The Chairperson shall inform the offender that matters in rebuttal, mitigation, or extenuation may be presented in writing, in person, or by telephone, with the caution that defenses presented in writing must be in the hands of the Chairperson of the Conduct Committee not later than one full business day prior to the scheduled hearing in order to be considered.
 2. In order for the Conduct Committee to consider any evidence or evidence in rebuttal, it must be presented in writing (including emails) to the Chairperson not later than one full business day before the hearing.
 3. The Chairperson of the Conduct Committee may collect additional information in writing, in person, or by telephone.
 4. All decisions of the Conduct Committee will be based on the information and evidence available at the time of the hearing.
 5. The Conduct Committee with the Chairperson presiding shall consider the case on the specified date utilizing such evidence as is available at the

time of the hearing. A decision of the case will be rendered by a majority vote. Within three (3) days following the final vote, a written decision will be provided to the President, the League Secretary and three (3) copies of the decision will be sent to the Club Representative: one (1) for his/her file, one (1) for the coach and one (1) for the offender or alleged violator. Additional copies may be sent to VYSA, other Club Representatives, or other League officials as appropriate. The written decision shall include a summary of the voting, but each Committee Member's vote shall not be reported.

6. The Chairperson of the Conduct Committee must advise the offender he/she has seven (7) business days to appeal the Conduct Committee's decision and the procedure for filing an appeal.

EXPECTED BEHAVIOR / CONDUCT CODES

Substitutes for the BRSL Conduct Code are not permitted, even if they are similar to the BRSL Conduct Code. The BRSL Conduct Code documents must be used (the Coaches/Team Manager, the Players/Parents).

The following forms and related guidelines are available on the BRSL Website.

- BRSL Coaches/Team Managers Expected Standards of Conduct
 - Each Coach, Assistant Coach, and Team Manager/Official must agree to uphold these BRSL behavior standards and sign the below document. The head coach will be held responsible for ALL carded individuals on the team sideline. A form is to be signed by EACH coach, assistant coach, and team manager/official who will be on the sideline at BRSL contests.
- BRSL Player & Parents Code of Conduct
 - One parent/Guardian per family (signing parent/guardian is responsible for educating their spouse/guardian/partner on required conduct) and every player must agree to uphold these BRSL behavior standards and sign the below document.
- BRSL Member Club Commitment
 - An officer of each Member Club must sign this document which certifies that their club understands, endorses, and will enforce all BRSL Codes of

Conduct and will adjudicate all instances of violations of same regardless of method of notification. Signing this document also certifies that the member club will print, distribute, obtain signatures, and make certain that ALL Coaches, Team Officials, Players, and Parents sign conduct code forms and are in the POSSESSION of the Team Manager at ALL BRSL Contests.

SEND OFFS - PENALTIES

All send-offs (Players, Parents/Spectators, Coaches/Team Officials must be reported to your Club Representative and the BRSL office within 12 hours!

Failure to report send-offs within the 12 hour time limit will be reviewed by the Conduct Committee, and additional sanctions may be levied against the club, team or individual.

A. PLAYERS (Send Offs)

1. A player receiving a red card, or two yellows, from a referee in a BRSL league game will serve a mandatory automatic one- game suspension from play in his/her next BRSL scheduled league game. This FIFA mandatory suspension is to be enforced for all dismissals (red cards) regardless of the reason and will include send-offs for receiving a second yellow card as well as for actions leading directly to the dismissal. The duration of the suspension can be extended beyond one match by the competition authority.
2. The automatic one-match suspension may only be waived if it is proven that the referee dismissed the wrong player in a case of mistaken identity.
3. In no case may the decision of the referee be modified after play has been restarted or after the game is complete, as is clearly stated in Law 5 of The Laws of the Game.
4. The Conduct Committee may impose additional penalties on the Club, Coach, or Player depending on the severity of the offense resulting in the red card (or two (2) yellow cards. This penalty does not preclude further or additional action by any other soccer governing body.
5. It is the responsibility of the coach of the player to withhold a red-carded player from the next league game and to record the sit-out and obtain the initials of the referee on the appropriate BRSL game card.

6. A player sitting-out a game due to a red card send off may be present at the game but may not wear his/her team's uniform.

B. COACHES and TEAM OFFICIALS (Send Offs)

1. Any coach (Head or Assistant coach) or team official receiving an official send off in a BRSL league game incurs the following penalties:
 - a. The coach or team official is indefinitely suspended from participating in the BRSL
 - b. The coach's or team official's club is fined \$ 50.00
 - c. Depending on the severity of the offense resulting an official send off, the Conduct Committee may conduct an investigation and may impose additional penalties.
 - d. A coach or team official who is indefinitely suspended may not participate in any BRSL activities with their team. A coach or team official may practice with their team; however, they may not be present at any complex at which their team is playing and have no communications with any member of the team, any other adult at the game complex or officials during the duration of the game. This ban on communications includes cell phones and any other two-way communications device. Failure to abide by this rule will result in additional penalties being imposed upon the coach or team official
 - e. To be reinstated after a send off suspension, the coach or team official must submit a letter to the Chairperson of the Conduct Committee explaining why he/she received the send off and how he/she intends to modify his/her behavior to keep from receiving send offs in the future. Blaming the officials is not acceptable. The coach's or team official's letter must be accompanied by a written endorsement from the coach's or team official's club president and a check for \$ 50.00 payable to the BRSL. The Conduct Committee may impose additional requirements for reinstatement.
2. Any individual sent off during the last game of the season must sit-out the first game of the next season in which he/she participates in the BRSL
3. Any coach or team official who plays a non-carded player will be suspended from the League for one year and fined \$100.00. If the fine is not paid within 10 days of when the infraction occurred the team will be suspended from BRSL play until the fine is paid. The Conduct Committee will rule when or if the coach or team official will be reinstated.

C. PARENTS/GUARDIANS and OTHER TEAM-ASSOCIATED SPECTATORS (Send Offs)

1. In the event that any parent, guardian, or team-associated friend or relative of any BRSL player is sent off by an official before, during, or immediately after a BRSL League game, that person will be suspended from attending BRSL games until the following conditions are met:
 - a. DID NOT attend the NEXT Two (2) League games of the team in which the send-off occurred.
 - b. Pays a fine to the League of \$50
 - c. Provides a letter in his/her own hand as to why the BRSL should allow them to be reinstated. Provides a letter from the associated team's Team Manager or Coach that endorses their return and provides a commitment for continued good behavior. Blaming the officials is not an acceptable excuse.

D. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. The member club is ultimately responsible for the actions of its players, coaches, team officials, Parents and their team's spectators.
2. These standards and codes of conduct apply before, during and after any games.
3. From time to time the BRSL may require the attendance of coaches, club representatives, and/or other club or team officials at meetings to further review the policies, procedures, rules and codes of conduct of the BRSL. Failure to attend these meetings may result in penalties up to and including suspension from the BRSL.

ABUSE/ASSAULT OF OFFICIALS

Any coach, club or team official, player, parent, or spectator alleged to have abused or assaulted a game official is automatically suspended from all BRSL games pending resolution by the VYSA.

A. REFEREE ABUSE:

1. Referee abuse is a verbal statement or physical act not resulting in bodily contact which implies or threatens physical harm to a referee or the referee's property or equipment.
2. Abuse includes, but is not limited to, the following acts committed upon a referee; using foul or abusive language toward a referee; spewing any beverage on a referee's personal property; or verbally threatening the referee.
3. Verbal threats are remarks that carry the implied or direct threat of physical harm. Such remarks as "I'll get you after the game" or "You won't get out of here in one piece" shall be deemed referee abuse.

B. REFEREE ASSAULT:

1. Referee assault is an intentional act of physical violence at or upon a referee.
2. Assault includes, but is not limited to, the following acts committed upon a referee: hitting; kicking; punching; choking; spitting at or on; grabbing or bodily running into a referee; head butting; the act of kicking or throwing any object at a referee that could inflict injury; damaging the referee's uniform or personal property, i.e. car, equipment, etc.

REPORTING SEND OFFS AND MISCONDUCT AGAINST REFEREES.

- A. A team official must report ALL send offs, and/or misconduct against referees to the BRSL administrator within 12 hours after the game in which the offense occurred. This includes ALL send-offs, including Coaches, Assistants, Team Managers, parents, players, and spectator. Failure to do so will result in a forfeit of the game in which the report was not made.

- B. This report must be include the following:

1. Club Name
2. Team Name
3. Location of Game, Other Team Name
4. Date & Time of Game
5. Reason for send offs or misconduct against referees.
6. Game Number
7. Center Referee name
8. Full names of players receiving red cards and yellow cards and quantity
9. Full names of Coach(es), Team Officials, and/or Parent(s)/Guardian/Spectators receiving a sendoff from the referee

PROTESTS / APPEALS / GRIEVANCES

PROTESTS

- A. Protests concerning game situations are not allowed under BRSL policy.
- B. No protests of referee decisions of judgments are allowed.

APPEALS

- A. Final decisions of the Conduct Committee may be appealed to the Appeals Committee.

GRIEVANCES

- A. Any Member Club, Club Officer, Director, Team or Player associated with a Member Club may file a grievance concerning actions of the officers or Board of Directors of BRSL. The party who feels aggrieved of such action and desires to have their grievance heard must file their grievance within seven (7) days of the written or verbal publication of the League action.
- B. The party who feels aggrieved must send:
 1. Written grievance citing the nature of the grievance and the remedy.
 2. Check in the amount of \$100.00 payable to BRSL.
 3. Registered mail delivery to BRSL President.
- C. The Board of Directors will hear all grievances.

- D. If the grievance is sustained, the check will be returned; if the grievance is denied, the check will be deposited in the general fund of the League.
- E. The decision of the Board of Directors is final within the BRSL.
- F. If the aggrieved party remains dissatisfied after having exhausted all requirements concerning grievances, or if not having exhausted all requirements concerning grievances, if he/she invokes the aid of the courts of any state or the United States, should the person bringing the action not prevail in such court action, he/she shall than be liable for all expenses incurred by BRSL in defending such including, but not limited to the following:
 - 1. Court Cost
 - 2. Attorney's Fees
 - 3. Reasonable compensation for time spent by BRSL employees in responding and defending against allegations in the action, responses to discovery and court appearances.
 - 4. Travel expenses
 - 5. Expenses of any special meeting(s) necessitated by the action.

(NOTE: There is difference between a grievance and a protest. Grievances concern League policy; protest concern game situations.)

Protests concerning game situations are not allowed under BRSL policy.

RECRUITMENT

A. BRSL OPPOSES THE RECRUITMENT OF PLAYERS. Players and parents are reminded that any player signing a player commitment form is bound to that team for the entire seasonal year (to include both the Fall and Spring season) unless he/she requests a release. All release requests must be submitted to the Assigned Registrar on the appropriate form, stating the reason for the request for release.

General Purpose: The member clubs recognize that the long-term viability of the BRSL depends on its ability to provide appropriate competition for its member clubs and teams, and that recruiting restrictions further that purpose. The member clubs also recognize that individual players should have wide latitude to select where they wish to pursue their soccer experience. These restrictions are meant to strike the balance so that individual choices are made in a manner that is not detrimental to a member club or team, or the league as a whole.

1. Open Recruiting: The open recruiting period shall be from April 15th to June 15th each year. During that time, teams and clubs are able to make general and specific solicitations to individual players. Specific solicitations shall not be made by the use of contact information obtained without permission from the player.

Commentary: While clubs are able to promote themselves and specifically target players from other clubs during the open recruiting period, the use of player lists or contact information obtained by a departing player, team manager, parent, or coach is an invasion of the other club's proprietary information.

2. Closed Recruiting: From June 16th through April 14th, teams are not able to recruit players with a present commitment to any club that is a member in good standing in the BRSL.

3. Year-Round Restrictions

a) Clubs may promote their strengths, including their coach experience, fee structure, past success, travel opportunities, etc. Clubs may not disparage other member clubs.

Examples of acceptable promotion: Our club has the best-trained coaches, has won the most divisions, has a cooperative agreement with DC United, Virginia Tech, etc.

Examples of unacceptable promotion: Negative comparisons that rely on disapproval of the other club's performance, and would include statements such as: their program is in disarray, they won't have enough players in your child's age division, they must have a problem because players keep leaving their team, etc.

4, Coach Restrictions: Coaches are free to coach for different clubs in successive seasons. Coaches are not permitted to engage in any coaching duties for any team within that new club that includes 3 or more players from the team they departed from until two seasons (fall and spring being considered one season each) have passed since they last coached those three or more players from the club they departed from.

Commentary: While coaches can select their employer, coaches may not use their inside access with one club to seek to move players to another club. If the new employer values the coach, then the new employer will be able to find an appropriate team placement that does not involve 3 or more players from the coach's prior team for a period of two seasons.

Any team participating in BRSL play or being formed for BRSL play, acting through its coaches, team officials, parents and players, which attempts to induce any player, listed on a valid team roster of another VYSA team, to leave his/her team shall be deemed to have recruited that player.